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CHRISTIANITY neither false nor useless,
the not as old as the Creation:

OR AN
ESSAY

To prove the
Usefulness, Truth, and Excellency
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION;

And to vindicate Dr CLARKE'S Discourse
concerning the *Evidences of Natural and Re-*
vealed Religion, from the Inconsistencies with
which it is charged by the Author of *Chri-*
stianity as old as the Creation.

By the Author of the Philosophical Enquiry, &c.

Εἶπα τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον καθεύδοντες διατελοῦ-
τε ἅν, εἰ μὴ τινα ἄλλον ὑμῖν ὁ Θεὸς ἐπιτίμ-
ψαι, κηδόμενος ὑμῶν. *Plato in Apol. Secr.*

L O N D O N:

Printed for R. WILLOCK, at Sir Isaac Newton's
Head near the Royal Exchange in Cornhill. 1732.

[Price One Shilling.]

Turnbull

CHRISTIANITY is the only religion
that is old as the Creation:

OR AN

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To prove the

Truth and Excellency

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION;

And to vindicate Dr. Clarke's Discourse
concerning the Reason and Re-
sistence of the Christian Religion, which
is charged by the Author of Chris-
tianity as old as the Creation.



By the Author of the Philosophical Enquiry, &c.

Printed for R. WILKINSON, at the Sign of the
Three Kings, in the Strand, near the Royal Exchange, in 1735.

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THE PREFACE.

THE design of this Essay is to do justice to Dr Clarke; and to shew that he has clearly proved the truth of certain principles diametrically opposite to those of the author of Christianity as old as the Creation; and to excite impartial enquirers to compare the Doctor's reasonings with these of that author.

The Doctor has proved; That bare reason, in fact, has never been sufficient to discover to the bulk of mankind, even the law of nature; tho' that law be founded upon the nature of things; and in that sense, is discoverable by reason; or by a rational, accurate, unprejudiced enquiry into the nature and relations of things.

And

And indeed what the author of Christianity as old as the Creation asserts concerning the sufficiency of reason, or the light of nature, is true in no other sense but this one: "That all that is deducible from the nature of things, is deducible from the nature of things; Or that whatsoever can be found out by the right, and accurate use of reason, can be found out by the right, accurate use of reason." Which was never denied.

2. That even supposing the law of nature, that is, the law deducible from the nature and relations of things, could be universally known and understood by all mankind in their present corrupt estate; bare unassisted reason cannot discover to mankind all that is necessary in their present estate to enforce sufficiently upon them obedience to that law. And particularly, that the doubts and scruples a thinking mind must needs form within itself concerning futurity; the terms of acceptance with GOD; and the condition of Penitents in another life, cannot be removed by meer reason. But that a divine revelation is necessary to give full satisfaction and comfort to those who, tho' conscious of their love to GOD and virtue, are at the same time sensible of their frequent relapses into known faults; and the imperfection of their best performances.

And

And there is this remarkable difference between Dr Clarke's way of reasoning to prove these truths, and that of the other author to establish his principles. That the latter chooses, instead of enquiring what really is the state of mankind, to determine presumptuously what it must, or ought to be in consequence of the divine goodness. And thus he draws certain consequences from the divine goodness; which, if they were true, would indeed prove the real state of mankind, to be unworthy of GOD. A conclusion which, I persuade myself, he will own sufficient to overturn all his reasonings, if it is found to follow from them.

The Doctor on the other hand first proves, that GOD is infinitely wise and good; but that because we cannot comprehend the whole of things, we can only be sure in the general. That GOD cannot lie or deceive: That he cannot command that which is vicious or immoral in it's tendency; nor indeed command tyrannically, or without an infinitely wise end and good reason. That he must will that all his rational creatures act reasonably, or according to the fitness of things. And that in judging his creatures, that is, in rewarding or punishing them, he will have due regard to their condition and circumstances. And that whatever GOD does is well done: And therefore, that the safest way to determine what it

is

is fittest for GOD to do; is to know what he really does. And, in consequence of these and such like general conclusions, the Doctor proceeds to enquire what is the real state of mankind; gives a clear and true representation of it; and so from real fact infers, that a divine revelation was wanting. And then shews, that the doctrine of JESUS CHRIST has all the characters and marks of a divine revelation.

In short, all that I pretend to do, is to vindicate Dr Clarke's incomparable Discourse from the inconsistencies with which it is charged by the author of Christianity as old as the Creation. And if I can perswade any one to attend to the true state of the question, and to look carefully into what Dr Clarke hath said, I have my reward. Truth desires no more, but an impartial fair trial and comparison.

CHRISTI-



CHRISTIANITY

Neither False nor Useless,

Tho' not as old as the

CREATION.



HAVING asserted in the strongest terms (in a *Philosophical Enquiry concerning the Connexion, betwixt the Doctrines and Miracles of JESUS CHRIST*) the eternal, universal, and absolutely unchangeable obligation of the law of nature, and that it is the great end of Christianity to excite and encourage to the obedience of that law; I think my self obliged to make a few remarks upon the conclusions the author of Christianity as old as the Creation infers, or at least seems willing should be infer'd from that principle.

I choose to begin with his last chapter, p. 319. in which he pretends to shew, that Dr Clarke, in his discourse of the unchangeable obligation of natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation, is inconsistent with himself, and to refute the Doctor

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from his own principles. The author of *Christianity, &c.* reasons thus: p. 335.

“ These *Deists* entirely agree with the do-
“ ctor, when he asserts, that some doctrines are
“ in their own nature *necessarily* and *demonstra-*
“ *bly* true; such as are all those which con-
“ cern the obligation of plain *moral precepts* :
“ and these neither need, nor can receive, any
“ stronger proof from miracles, than what
“ they have already (tho’ not perhaps so clear-
“ ly to all capacities) from the evidence of
“ right reason. Other doctrines are in their
“ own nature *necessarily false*, and *impossible to*
“ *be true*; such as are all *absurdities* and *con-*
“ *tradictions*, and all doctrines that tend to pro-
“ mote vice; and these can never receive any
“ degree of proof from all the miracles in the
“ world. But as to what the doctor adds,
“ that other doctrines are in their own nature
“ *indifferent*, or *possible*, or perhaps *probable* to
“ be true, and those could not have been
“ known to be positively true, but by the e-
“ vidence of miracles, which prove them to
“ be certain; here these *Deists* beg leave to dis-
“ fer with him as to any doctrines in their own
“ nature indifferent, BEING THE WILL OF
“ GOD; for that would be to suppose, what
“ the doctor has proved to be impossible, that
“ GOD acts arbitrarily, and out of meer wil-
“ fulness.”

Now, not to mention, that no doctrine
which does not concern the obligation of moral
precepts can, in strict propriety of speech,
be said to be the *will of GOD*: I would on-
ly ask, where it is that Dr *Clarke* says, that
doctrines

doctrines in their own nature *indifferent* may be proved to be the will of God by *miracles*; and why this author has changed Dr Clarke's words, and instead of *true*, *actually true*, *certain*, or some other such equivalent term, put in their place, words of his own, words never used by Dr Clarke on that occasion (*Being the will of GOD*)? the reason will be easily perceived, if we change our author's objection a little, and make use of Dr Clarke's own words, where our author pretends to quote him; which is but doing justice to the Doctor. For then our author's objection will run thus:

“ Here the *Deists* beg leave to differ with him,
 “ as to any doctrines in their own nature in-
 “ different, being proved to be *actually true*;
 “ for that would be to suppose, what the Do-
 “ ctor has proved to be impossible, that God
 “ acts arbitrarily, and out of meer wilfulness.”

And when the objection is set in this fair just light, it plainly has neither sense nor meaning in it: for into whose head could it possibly enter to argue thus? *Such a doctrine, considered by itself, is indifferent that is uncertain; but when other considerations are taken into the estimate (miracles for example) it may be found to be actually true: therefore GOD acts arbitrarily, and out of meer wilfulness.* Is God indeed arbitrary and wilful, because the nature of things are so stubborn and wilful, that tho' they cannot be proved in a way their nature does not admit, yet they may be proved by an evidence consonant and agreeable to their nature?

Our author goes on in this manner: “ And
 “ here they would ask him, since as he owns
 “ evil spirits can do miracles, and the nature

“ of the doctrine must be taken into the confi-
 “ deration, how the miracles can prove a do-
 “ ctrine *relating to indifferent things* to be from
 “ God?

Here again I must beg leave to do justice to that *worthy writer* Dr Clarke, and instead of that phrase *relating to indifferent things*, to put in the Doctor's own Words, that we may see how our author's objection will stand when this just change is made. And if instead of a doctrine *relating to indifferent things*, it is said, in Dr Clarke's words, a doctrine *in itself indifferent*; that is to say, as the Doctor himself explains it, *Such a doctrine, as cannot, by the light of nature and reason alone, be certainly known whether it be true or false*; our author's question, or the question of those *Deists* whose cause he pleads, will be to this effect: “ And here
 “ they would ask him, since as he owns evil
 “ spirits can do miracles, and the nature of
 “ the doctrine must be taken into considera-
 “ tion, how the miracles can prove a do-
 “ ctrine in itself indifferent, or that cannot
 “ be known to be true or false by reason a-
 “ lone, to be from God?

And to the question stated in this light, I have no more to reply, but that Dr Clarke hath given a full, clear, and satisfactory answer to it; which it is not in our author, or his *Deist's* power to invalidate.

Our author continues thus: “ Or how there
 “ can be any such doctrines in the christian
 “ religion, if what Dr Clarke says be true; that
 “ every

“ every one of the doctrines it teaches, as
 “ matter of truth, has a natural tendency, and
 “ and a direct powerful influence to reform
 “ and correct men’s lives and manners?”

There cannot indeed be any doctrines in the christian religion *relating to indifferent things*; because, as Dr Clarke has proved, every one of the doctrines it teaches has a natural tendency, and a direct powerful influence to promote the honour of God, and the practice of righteousness; and these indeed are not *indifferent things*. But where has Dr Clarke said that there may be in the christian religion doctrines relating to indifferent things? nay, on the contrary, doth he not ever assert, that every one of the doctrines Christianity teaches, is so far from being indifferent in it’s nature and tendency, that there is not one of them, which has not naturally, a direct powerful influence to promote piety and virtue? and if he hath not said so, is it fair or just to represent him saying so? the Doctor hath sufficiently explained again, and again, what he means by doctrines in their own nature indifferent; and our author could not have any other reason for changing the Doctor’s words, or misrepresenting his meaning; but that he could not possibly disprove what the Doctor has so clearly proved; and therefore it was to his purpose to make the Doctor appear to say what he hath no where said. To say, that a doctrine that tends to promote the honour of God, and the practice of righteousness, is not *indifferent*; after the pains that Dr Clarke hath taken to explain what he means by *indifferent* is meer quibbling. And to prove that every doctrine which hath a tendency to promote

more virtue, piety, and righteousness, can be known to be certainly true by reason alone; and without the evidence of miracles, is undertaking a very difficult task; and yet it is what our author, or his *Deists*, must prove, or their question amounts to no more than this, “How can any doctrines which have a natural tendency to reform mens lives, stand in need of miracles to prove their truth?” which is the very question Dr *Clarke* hath answered. When the truth of a doctrine is proved to result necessarily from the consideration of the divine attributes, and the relation man stands in to God, that doctrine is indeed proved to be true in itself; and such a doctrine cannot receive any stronger proof from miracles. But is there not a manifest difference between saying a doctrine is demonstrable from the nature of God and of mankind; and saying that the belief of a doctrine naturally tends to encourage virtue, and restrain from vice? Or are indeed all doctrines, the belief of which has this tendency, for that very reason, necessarily true? But our author goes on thus, p. 337. “The *Deists* can, by no means, come into the Doctor’s distinction between the moral part of our SAVIOUR’S doctrine, and that part which evidently tends to promote the honour God, and the practice of righteousness; it being manifestly a distinction without any difference.”

It appears to me of such consequence to the whole of our author’s argument, to overthrow that distinction hitherto so universally received; that I wonder our author should have satisfied himself with barely affirming, that it is a distinction without any difference. For my own part,

part, so different are the eyes of my understanding from his, that it hath ever appeared to me to be a distinction founded upon a clear and obvious difference in the nature of things. To be sure every doctrine that tends to promote a moral end, is moral in it's tendency; and therefore in that sense all the doctrines of Christianity may be justly called moral doctrines. Yet that does not hinder, but that in accurate writing a distinction ought to be made between that part of our SAVIOUR'S doctrine, in which he lays down rules for the conduct of life, evidently founded on the nature and reason of things, and consequently of eternal and universal obligation; And the other part, which affirms the truth of certain propositions; the persuasion of which has a powerful influence to promote the observance of these moral rules, or enjoins the use of certain means in order to our improvement in virtue, and our being assisted to live agreeably to the law of our natures. Because the first part is capable of proof from the nature of the things themselves; from the properties and relations of moral agents. The other part asserts certain facts, or constitutions in the Government of the world, only to be known by the testimony of him, who governs the world; and in consequence of the truth of these facts enjoins certain means which naturally tend to promote virtue and righteousness, but could not be known before these facts or constitutions were revealed; from which their fitness follows. Of this kind are the eternity of future rewards; an universal judgment; the resurrection of our bodies; the forgiveness of sins upon repentance, when seriously implored in the name of CHRIST; the assistance

assistance promised to the virtuous in times of
 tryal and difficulty, when it is seriously de-
 manded in our SAVIOUR'S name, and accord-
 ing to his promise; and several others of the
 christian motives to honour GOD, and live vir-
 tuously, which Dr *Clarke* hath so well explain-
 ed; as well as the means of improving in
 virtue, which result from the truth of these mo-
 tives; such as prayer in the name of CHRIST;
 the commemoration of his death and resurrecti-
 on; and other such christian duties. Several con-
 siderations, fetched from the nature of GOD,
 and what we are able to comprehend of his
 government and providence, contribute not a
 little to render these doctrines probable, but
 it is only testimony; testimony from GOD him-
 self; or, which comes to the same thing, by
 his authority; that according to the very na-
 ture of things, is able to prove these do-
 ctrines to be actually true. A very little ac-
 quaintance with common *logic*, or the *doctrine*
 of *evidence*, will sufficiently prevent any one's
 being misled by arguments, which indeed have
 no force at all; but upon the supposition, that
 there is no place for a distinction, which that
 science clearly establishes: and therefore it is
 needless to insist long upon this head. Allow
 me only, by an example or two, to set the
 affair in a light suited to every capacity. 'Tis
 certainly the duty of every young man to live
 soberly and virtuously, and to improve his
 mind, as well as to take care of his health; sup-
 pose, therefore, a rich well disposed friend, to
 excite and encourage a young fellow to behave
 himself well, should write him a kind letter;
 lay before him the proper rules for his conduct
 and improvement; and at the same time pro-
 mise

mise him a plentiful estate, in ten or twenty years, if he behave himself according to these rules; and all that time maintain a friendly correspondence with him, by letters upon virtuous and useful subjects: such a proffer hath certainly a moral tendency, because, in the very nature of the thing, it must have a powerful influence to engage the young man to live wisely: the virtuous correspondence proposed is likewise a noble mean to cheerish and improve the virtuous disposition to which the reward is promised: but surely it is not the virtuous tendency of the promise; nor of the proposed commerce that could render the young man secure as, to his obtaining at last the profered reward; it is only the promise itself confirmed and sealed in due valid form that could satisfy him, as to the reality and truth of this generous motive, to behave as common sense and reason tells him he should, without any such expectation of reward. In like manner, if a worthy offended father, after having justly abandoned his rakish rebellious son, moved by fatherly pity, and generous compassion, should promise his son, if he would yet reform in earnest, and give good evidence of his amendment, that he would forgive his former viciousness; assist him in his endeavours to retrieve lost time; and improve in virtue and knowledge; and at last, after having had sufficient proof of his sincere and thorough reformation, make him as happy in every respect as his heart could wish; and should send one to deal with his son for this effect, and with full power to satisfy the son as to the sincerity and truth of the father's promise: such conduct is certainly worthy of a virtuous

tender hearted father; hath a fine tendency, and is in that respect moral, nay truly divine; and thus the son would have a strong additional motive and inducement to amend and correct his manners, which could not fail to have a very good effect, if there were yet remaining in his breast any sparks of humanity and gratitude unextinguished: such a motive however he could not have had, if the loving compassionate father had not condescended to give him assurances of it under his own hand and seal; and yet it must be owned, that to the thing itself he is strongly bound, without such encouragement, by all the ties of nature and of virtue, of reason and of religion.

But our author goes on thus: “ And if the
 “ whole of religion consists in the honour of
 “ GOD, and the good of mankind (which Dr
 “ *Clarke* is far from denying); nothing can more
 “ effectually strike at the certainty of all re-
 “ ligion, than the supposing, that mankind
 “ could not be certain, that whatever tended
 “ to promote the honour of GOD, and the
 “ practice of righteousness was the will of
 “ GOD, ’till they were convinced of it by
 “ undeniable miracles.”

Now here again, that no body may mistake Dr *Clarke*’s meaning, I must observe that our author has again misrepresented him; and that, when justice is done to the Doctor, and if we keep to his meaning and words, our author’s objection will stand thus: “ And if the whole of
 “ religion consists in the honour of GOD, and
 “ the good of mankind (which Dr *Clarke* is
 “ far from denying); nothing can more effe-
 “ ctually

“ actually strike at the certainty of all religion,
 “ than the supposing that mankind could not
 “ be certain, that a doctrine *in itself indifferent*;
 “ that is, (which could not be known by the
 “ light of nature and reason) was actually true
 “ (however moral and good it's tendency may
 “ be) till they were convinced of it by unde-
 “ niable miracles.”

And when the objection is set in this fair light; every attentive impartial reader must needs be surprized what the author can mean by it. Is it striking at the certainty of all religion to say, that certain doctrines which, if proved and believed to be true, would have a powerful influence to promote piety and virtue, can only, according to the nature of things, be proved to be true by testimony and miracles; and to *show* that God hath *testified* the truth of these doctrines by miracles undeniable? all the duties of Religion and morality are (as Dr Clarke has proved much better than our author, and with quite a different view) of everlasting and unchangeable obligation. But there are some motives, the belief of which must, in the nature of things, have a mighty influence to promote the practice of these duties, that divine testimony, confirmed by miracles, can only render certain. And how these are proved to be certain and positively true by the miracles of JESUS CHRIST, Dr Clarke has demonstrated beyond all exception. And if this is striking at the certainty of all religion; *demonstrating* the internal excellency and obligation of moral duties; and at the same time *confirming* other considerations, which have the most powerful tendency to promote the practice and

observance of these duties, is fighting against religion and virtue. Sure I am, it may be much more reasonably said on the other hand, that the endeavouring to destroy or diminish all regard to the motives JESUS CHRIST sets before us, confirmed by his miracles, is striking at the certainty of the most powerful persuasives to virtue; and under pretence of magnifying the force of the Religion of reason and nature, cutting off what has ever been found in fact to be the greatest restraint from vice.

Our author goes on thus, p. 338. " If no
 " miracles can prove any indifferent thing to
 " be the will of God, and all that evidently
 " tends to promote the honour of God, and
 " practice of righteousness, are *plain moral*
 " *duties* (as the Doctor contends); and all such
 " duties neither need nor can receive any
 " stronger proof from miracles, than what
 " they have already from the evidence of right
 " reason. How can miracles (says these *Deists*)
 " have any other use than to make men con-
 " sider the nature and tendency of a doctrine,
 " and judge from thence whether it be from
 " God." Here again our author makes his
Deists pervert and change the Doctor's meaning
 and words; for in the first place, it is true
 the Doctor hath often said, that moral duties
 can receive no stronger proof from miracles
 than what they have already from the evidence
 of right reason. But the Doctor hath no
 where said, that all doctrines that evidently
 tend to promote the honour of God, and the
 practice of righteousness are *plain moral duties*;
 but on the contrary he ever distinguishes be-
 tween the *moral part* of CHRIST's doctrines,
 and

and the *doctrines* of CHRIST which tend to promote obedience to moral precepts; being in their natures powerful motives to such moral obedience. But it seems our author thinks it allowable to reason against Dr *Clarke*, as if he had made no such distinction, because *he himself* thinks there is no foundation for the distinction; and indeed, as I have already said, the whole of our author's argument, not only in this chapter, but through all the book, depends intirely upon this single point. That there is no difference between moral duties and motives to the practice of these duties; which is just as absurd as it would be to say, that there is no difference betwixt writing good sense, and a reward for writing it. And in the next place, Dr *Clarke* has no where said, that no indifferent thing, that is, no positive institution, can be proved to be the will of GOD by miracles. I once designed to have shown at some length, in opposition to our author, that things meerly *positive* may be made by external revelation *ingredients* of religion, not only consistently with the good of mankind, as well as the honour of GOD; but effectually to prevent superstition, and all it's mischievous consequences. But I have already in the *Enquiry*, sufficiently vindicated several of the positive institutions of Christianity; and find myself prevented, as to what I had further to say upon that subject, by some late writers against our author, particularly my worthy ingenious friend Mr *Wallace* in his *Remarks*. Allow me only to say, that for all the author of *Christianity as old as the Creation* hath said to the contrary, it may easily be proved; That consistently with the good of mankind, and the honour of GOD,

to

to promote the most valuable and worthy of all purposes, the maintaining in human minds a steady constant sense of their absolute dependence upon God their Creator, and indispensable obligation to submit to his will in all things, it might have been commanded by external revelation; *That every man should once every day, hold up his hand straight for a minute or two, as a declaration of his bearing in remembrance his dependence on GOD, and obligation to obey him.* In this argument it is proper to abstract from all that is positive in Christianity, and to take for an example of a positive thing that may be made an ingredient of religion; an action the most indifferent in it's own nature that can be imagined; and not ordained by any pretended revelation. Because if it cannot be demonstrated, that any action, the most positive and indifferent in itself that can be thought of, cannot be made an *ingredient of religion*; all possible objections against the *positive institutions of Christianity* must fall to the ground. Now to prove that such an indifferent action cannot be made an ingredient in religion; it must be proved, that the maintaining a constant sense of our dependence upon God cannot be commanded by any external revelation: that it is inconsistent with the honour of God, and the good of mankind, for God to require and command it; because common sense and reason tells us we ought to do it. Or it must be proved, that tho' God should command by an external revelation our maintaining and keeping in our minds a constant sense of our dependence, he cannot consistently with his honour, and the good of mankind, command us to express the
sense

sense we have of our dependence by any *outward sign*: nor command us regularly to perform any *ceremony, rite, or indifferent action*, in order to preserve upon our minds that sense; and our author has as yet said nothing to prove either the one or the other. And indeed to attempt to prove the first would be to attempt to prove, that it is inconsistent with the goodness of God, for God to take all care and pains to keep alive among mankind a sense and persuasion that naturally tends to promote his honour, and their good. And to assert the last, is to assert, that it is unworthy of God that men should declare the sense they have of the obligations they are under to honour and obey him: for if it is consistent with the honour of God, and the good of mankind, that mankind should have this sense internally, and declare it outwardly, it can never be inconsistent with the honour of God and the good of mankind, to appoint some *outward sign* by which it may be declared; seeing it cannot be declared *outwardly*, but by giving some *outward sign* of it. If all mankind in general, or any particular nation, should agree to perform regularly every day, any action, in itself indifferent, as a public outward declaration of the sense they have of their dependence on God, and obligation to obey him: such a contract or agreement could hardly be reckoned inconsistent with the honour of God, and the good of mankind; the end and design of this agreement being to preserve that sense of mankind's dependence upon God, and obligation to honour and obey him; than which nothing can have a better effect in society. Much less therefore can such an appointment by God himself

himself be inconsistent with the honour of God, and the good of mankind; seeing the performing any indifferent action, to declare the sense of our dependence upon God in obedience to the *divine appointment*, must have a more powerful influence to preserve that sense than the doing it voluntarily, or by human agreement. And whatever may be said, as to any society of men's having a right to appoint any thing of that kind; there can be no dispute about God's having a right to make such an appointment. 'Tis to no purpose to say, that it must be the main, nay the only end of an external revelation, truly divine, to promote the practice of moral duties: for that can only prove, that the end of every appointment, by external revelation, must be moral. And any sign or action that is proper to promote among mankind the sense of their dependence upon God, when appointed by God for that end, however indifferent it may be in itself, becomes in consequence of it's *appointment*, in order to that end, *moral* in it's tendency. And no action or sign is fit to be appointed for such an end, unless it is in it's own nature indifferent. Because it is only by doing a thing in itself *indifferent*, in obedience to the divine appointment, by which we can declare the sense we have of our dependence upon God, and our obligation to submit to his will in all things; or indeed so effectually preserve upon our minds this sense. The doing any action in itself not *indifferent*, but of a moral and obligatory nature, could not serve this purpose so well; because such an action, being in itself moral and obligatory, could not *purely* signify and declare the sense we

we have of our obligation to God, and dependence upon him: nor would such an action, to the doing which we are obliged upon many accounts, contribute so effectually to preserve that sense as the doing an action for the which there could be no reason, but the declaring outwardly our having that sense. Whatever God may do in a *political view* when he condescends to be a king or lawgiver to a particular people (as he did to the Jews): it is certain, that in a view *meerly religious* he cannot multiply the observance of things in themselves indifferent. But as in the former case God cannot be said to act *arbitrarily*, meerly because we are not able to comprehend the reasons and end of his *political laws*; but on the contrary ought, on account of his infinite wisdom and goodness, to be supposed by us ever to act for reasons worthy of himself, and of his administration: and never to have commanded any thing, without an excellent end and reason; because to act otherwise would indeed be to act tyrannically. So in the the other case, God cannot be said to act *arbitrarily* or *without a reason* when a thing is commanded, which, tho' in itself *indifferent*, yet in consequence of it's *appointment for a certain end*, becomes evidently conducive to a most noble and worthy purpose. 'Tis only the *multiplying such commands* in such a manner, as to *infringe* considerably upon human liberties; and so as to render the strict observance of these commands cumbersome and inconvenient, or a *real hardship*; when the end, the only end, of such commandments can be obtained by one or a few observances, not in the least troublesome or incommodious; *that can be called, acting wilfully, or commanding tyrannically.*

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rannically. Wicked priests, says our author, would soon teach the people to place all religion and virtue in the strict observance of such a positive institution. But certainly that wicked priests may pervert such an institution for their own ends, is no better reason why there never ought to be any such institution; than the abuse that has been often made of civil power, is to prove that there ought to be no such thing as civil power. I know nothing that hath not, or is not capable of being abused and perverted: and it is sufficient, with regard to all that is said by our *author and his Deists*, of the superstitious mischievous abuses that have been made of *positive institutions*, to observe, that the *abuse* of a thing will never prove that a thing is bad: and that if GOD *acts arbitrarily and wilfully* when he does any thing for mankind, that mankind may abuse; GOD *acts arbitrarily and wilfully* in bestowing upon mankind reason, philosophy, and wit, for surely these have been most manifestly abused and misapplied to the worst, the most pernicious purposes: not only to hinder men from *hearkning* to the voice of GOD by external revelation; and to laugh them out of all regard to what he thinks fit to *command*, with the clearest marks of his *authority*; but likewise to prevent our *hearkning* to the voice of nature itself; the voice of the law of GOD within our breasts; and to persuade men that *fancy*, arbitrary whimsical *fancy*, ought to be our only guide: that we may live as we list; pursue our pleasures without remorse or fear; for GOD concerneth himself not in the matter.

Our author goes on thus, p. 338. "Allow-
 " ing the Doctor what hypothesis he pleases
 " in

“ in relation to miracles; yet if the doctrines
 “ themselves, from their internal excellency do
 “ not give us a certain proof of the will of
 “ GOD; no traditional miracles can do it;
 “ because one probability added to another
 “ will not amount to certainty.”

Dr *Clarke* requires no hypothesis to be allowed him in relation to miracles, but plainly and clearly proves (Dr *Clarke's Discourse*, &c. p. 383.) to use his own words. “ That the doctrine
 “ CHRIST taught being in itself possible, and
 “ in it's consequences tending to promote the
 “ honour of GOD, and true righteousness among men; and the miracles he worked
 “ being such, that there neither was, nor
 “ could be, any pretence of more, or greater
 “ miracles to be set up in opposition to them;
 “ it was as infallibly certain, that he had truly
 “ a divine commission, as it was certain, that
 “ GOD would not himself impose upon men
 “ a necessary and invincible error.”

Now if Dr *Clarke* hath proved all this; he hath not added one probability to another in order to make up a certainty: tho' undoubtedly, it is only by accumulating *probabilities*, that moral *certainty* can be produced. But to a *probability* arising from the doctrines of CHRIST considered by themselves in their natures and tendency; he hath added a *certainty* arising from the miracles which CHRIST work'd to prove his divine commission to teach these doctrines: a *certainty* founded clearly upon a *principle* as plain and true as any other in the world can be, *that GOD can neither lie nor deceive*. And Dr *Clarke* has clearly proved, notwithstanding

all our author hath said, that it is infallibly true, that CHRIST had indeed a divine mission to *assure* us of the truth of certain *propositions*, the belief of which hath a powerful tendency to promote the practice of all moral duties: and, in consequence of the truth of these propositions, to *command* the observance of certain *duties*; the *fitness* of which evidently appears from the truth of the *propositions* which he taught and confirmed. And to deal plainly with our author; if he would prove directly what he is manifestly aiming at, tho' indirectly, throughout the whole of his dialogue, namely, that Christianity is *false* and *useless*, he must prove that the doctrines CHRIST taught have not a strong and powerful influence to promote the observance of moral duties; obedience to the law of nature; and that the *few positive institutions* of Christianity have no tendency; no fitness to promote that end. For if all that CHRIST taught and enjoined tends plainly to that noble end, Christianity is certainly *useful*, exceeding *useful*. Or he must prove, that the miracles which CHRIST work'd, were not sufficient to evince his divine commission to teach these doctrines. For tho' he should prove that natural reason is able to demonstrate the truth of every doctrine CHRIST taught, as a motive to the observance of the moral law (which he will not readily undertake); it will not follow, that these doctrines may not likewise be proved to be true by extrinſical revelation and miracles; nor that such a proof of them may not be useful and fit for very noble and excellent purposes. And if Christianity properly consists in proving certain doctrines to be true, by the *extrinſic evidence of miracles*; even supposing that these

these doctrines were capable of an internal proof and evidence, it would not follow that Christianity was as old as the Creation: unless it could be proved, that CHRIST's confirmation of these doctrines by his miracles was as ancient as their internal evidence. And therefore our author, even to prove the point he pretends to prove, must shew that all the doctrines CHRIST taught, as motives to the observance of the *Law of Nature*, not only have the same internal evidence that all the precepts of the *Law of Nature* have; but likewise had from the beginning of the Creation the same *extrinsic evidence* of their truth that the miracles of JESUS CHRIST give them. For a publication or a confirmation in a certain way can never be said to be older than that publication or confirmation is. But it is plain, that all the pains our author takes, to shew that the Gospel is nothing else but a republication of the Religion of Nature; is designed to shew, that there never was need of such a republication: that such a republication would have been useless; and that there never was such a republication by a commission from Heaven. He hath not indeed any where directly said so; but I am much mistaken if he, or his *Deists*, will be angry with any one for taking that to be his design and intent. Let me therefore only tell him, that he hath by no means proved that point; nor so much as shewn that Dr Clarke is inconsistent with himself, even tho' Dr Clarke's distinction between the moral part and the rest of our SAVIOUR's doctrine, should be laid aside. For, as we shall see by and by, Dr Clarke hath clearly proved, that a publication even of the Law and Religion of Nature, by
external

external Revelation and Miracles, was not only useful but necessary when our SAVIOUR appeared in the world teaching the moral law, and exhorting to the observance of it by the most powerful and perswasive motives. And our author hath not said any thing that deserves the least notice, against the sufficiency of our SAVIOUR's miracles, to prove that he taught by a divine commission: *Except that evil spirits can do miracles*; to which objection Dr Clarke and several others have long ago shewn, that our SAVIOUR himself gave a very satisfactory answer. *And that the wise Greeks reckon miracles only fit for fools*; to which it is fully enough to answer, that while there are so many fools in the world, that can only be restrained from being knaves, by arguments fitted to their capacity and genius, that it is a very bad office to endeavour to let these fools see there is nothing at all in these arguments which are such a *restraint and curb* upon them. While the belief of miracles is only employ'd to excite men to live honestly and righteously, and honour GOD, it is certainly doing mischief to weaken the force of that belief, tho' at the bottom there was no foundation for it but human weakness and credulity. And yet after all I may adventure to defy our author to prove, that *certain miracles* are not, in the nature of things, a fit and proper proof of *certain propositions*; and consequently a proof not to fools only, but to the wisest. But I'll say no more on that subject at present, having sufficiently clear'd that matter in the *Philosophical Enquiry concerning the connexion between the Miracles and Doctrines of JESUS CHRIST*.

Our

Our author, p. 339. goes on to show, that Dr *Clarke*, when he endeavours to prove the necessity of a Divine Revelation, destroys all that he had said concerning the eternal, universal, and unchangeable obligation of the Law of Nature. Now in order to see whether the Doctor does indeed contradict himself, let us enquire what the Doctor himself hath said, and not content ourselves with our author's account, or rather misrepresentation of the Doctor's argument. And indeed no more is necessary to confute the false principles our author endeavours to establish throughout the whole of his book, than to set in opposition to them the principles which Dr *Clarke* has indisputably demonstrated.

“ Dr *Clarke* proves first, that the same necessary and eternal different relations; that
 “ different things bear one to another: and
 “ the same consequent fitness or unfitness of
 “ the application of different things, or different relations one to another; with regard
 “ to which the will God always and necessarily does determine itself to choose to act
 “ only what is agreeable to justice, equity, goodness, and truth, in order to the welfare of the whole universe; ought likewise
 “ constantly to determine the wills of all subordinate rational Beings; to govern all their
 “ actions by the same rules for the good of the public in their respective stations. That
 “ is, these eternal and necessary differences of things make it fit and reasonable for all
 “ creatures so to act; they cause it to be their
 “ duty; or lay an obligation upon them so to
 “ do

“ do, even separate from the consideration of
 “ these rules, being the positive will or com-
 “ mand of God; and also antecedent to any
 “ respect or regard, expectation or apprehension
 “ of any particular, private, or personal ad-
 “ vantage, reward, or punishment, either pre-
 “ sent or future; annexed, either by natural
 “ consequence, or by positive appointment, to
 “ the practice or neglecting of those rules.”

And from this principle which he demonstrates,
 p. 175, &c. He begins p. 197. to deduce in par-
 ticular, the three great and principal branches
 of moral duties, or natural religion, from
 which all the other and smaller instances of du-
 ty do naturally flow, or may without difficul-
 ty be derived. But to show the weakness of
 our author's reasoning against Dr. Clarke, or
 rather against the necessity of a divine reve-
 lation, it is necessary to take particular notice
 of several things which the Doctor says and
 proves, in explaining and confirming that prin-
 ciple. And first of all, let us observe, that
 the Doctor expressly says, p. 184. “ That
 “ what these eternal and unalterable relations,
 “ respects, or proportions of things, with their
 “ consequent agreements or disagreements,
 “ fitness or unfitness, absolutely and necessa-
 “ rily *are in themselves*; That also they *appear*
 “ to be to the understandings of all intelli-
 “ gent beings, except those only who under-
 “ stand things to be what they are not; that
 “ is, whose understandings are either very
 “ imperfect, or very much depraved.” And
 therefore, p. 185. he says. “ Negligent mis-
 “ understanding, and wilful passions, or lusts,
 “ are the only causes which can make a reason-
 “ able

“ able creature act contrary to reason. For
 “ originally, and in reality, 'tis as natural and
 “ (morally speaking) necessary, that the will
 “ should be determined in every action, by
 “ the reason of the thing, and the right of the
 “ case, as 'tis natural, and (absolutely speak-
 “ ing) necessary, that the understanding should
 “ submit to a demonstrated truth.”

Secondly. He asserts and proves, p. 188, &c.
 “ That in like manner as no one, who is in-
 “ structed in Mathematics, can forbear giving
 “ his assent to every geometrical demonstra-
 “ tion; of which he understands the terms,
 “ either by his own study, or by having had
 “ them explained to him by others; so no
 “ man, who has either patience or opportuni-
 “ ties to examine and consider things himself;
 “ or has the means of being taught and in-
 “ structed in any tolerable manner by others,
 “ concerning the necessary relation and depen-
 “ dency of things, can avoid giving his assent to
 “ the fitness, and reasonableness of his govern-
 “ ing all his actions by the law or rule before-
 “ mentioned, even tho' his practice thro' the
 “ prevalence of brutish lusts, be most absurd-
 “ ly contradictory to that assent.”

Thirdly, In answer to the only thing which
 can with any colour be objected against the
 necessity of the mind's giving it's assent to the
 eternal law of righteousness: which is the total
 ignorance that some whole nations are repor-
 ted to lie under, of the nature and force of
 these moral obligations. He replies: “ All
 “ that this objection proves, supposing the
 “ matter of it to be true, is only this; not
 “ that the mind of man can ever dissent from
 E “ the

“ the rule of right, much less that there is
 “ no necessary difference in nature between
 “ moral good and evil. But it proves only,
 “ that men had great need to be taught and
 “ instructed in some very plain and easy, as
 “ well as certain, truths; and if they be impor-
 “ tant truths, that then men have need also to
 “ have them frequently inculcated and strong-
 “ ly enforced upon them. Which is very
 “ true, and is (as shall hereafter be particularly
 “ made to appear) one good argument for the
 “ reasonableness of expecting a revelation.”

This is a fair account, in the Doctor's own
 words, of what he says and proves concerning
 the universality and plainness of moral obliga-
 tions. Let us therefore enquire whether the
 Doctor is justly charged with contradicting
 what he had said on that subject, when he
 afterwards asserts, *p.* 272, &c. “ That tho’
 “ the necessity and indispensableness of all the
 “ great and moral obligations in religion be
 “ thus in general deducible, even demonstra-
 “ bly, by a chain of clear and undeniable
 “ reasoning: yet (in the present state of the
 “ world, by what means soever it came ori-
 “ ginally to be so corrupted) such is the careles-
 “ ness, inconsiderateness, and want of attention
 “ of the greater part of mankind; so many the
 “ prejudices and false notions taken up by evil
 “ education; so strong and violent the unrea-
 “ sonable lusts, appetites, and desires of sense;
 “ and so great the blindness introduced by su-
 “ perstitious opinions, vicious customs, and
 “ debauched practices thro’ the world; that
 “ very few are able in reality and effect to
 “ discover these things clearly and plainly for
 “ themselves:

“ themselves: but men have great need of par-
 “ ticular teaching, and much instruction to
 “ convince them of the truth and certainty,
 “ and importance of these things; to give them
 “ a due sense, and clear and just apprehensions
 “ concerning them; and to bring them effe-
 “ ctually to the practice of the plainest and
 “ most necessary duties.”

Or when he asserts, p. 281. “ That tho’
 “ in almost every age, there have indeed been
 “ in the heathen world some wise and brave
 “ and good men, who have made it their bu-
 “ siness to study and practise the duties of
 “ natural religion themselves; and to teach
 “ and exhort others to do the like; who seem
 “ therefore to have been raised up by providence
 “ as instruments to reprove in some measure,
 “ and put some kind of check to the extreme
 “ superstition and wickedness of the nations,
 “ wherein they lived; yet none of these have
 “ ever been able to reform the world with
 “ any considerably great and universal success;
 “ because they have been but very few, that
 “ have in earnest set themselves about this ex-
 “ cellent work; and they that have indeed sin-
 “ cerely done it, have themselves been intirely
 “ very ignorant of some doctrines; and very
 “ doubtful and uncertain of others, absolutely
 “ necessary for the bringing about that great
 “ end; and those things which they have been
 “ certain of, and in good measure understood,
 “ they have not been able to prove and explain
 “ clearly enough; and those that they have
 “ been able to prove and explain by suffici-
 “ ently clear reasoning; they have not yet
 “ had authority enough to enforce and in-

“culcate upon mens minds with so strong an
 “impression, as to influence and govern the
 “general practice of the world.”

If these assertions are true, the conclusion
 the Doctor draws from them, in his seventh
 proposition, *p.* 304. must be inevitably so.
 “That for these reasons there was plainly
 “wanting a *divine revelation*, to recover man-
 “kind out of their universal degenerate state,
 “into a state suitable to the original excel-
 “lency of their nature.”

Now the Doctor proves the assertion to be true;
 from which this conclusion necessarily follows in
 the only way that *facts* must, or indeed can be pro-
 ved at all, from the *history* and *experience* of all
 ages. The enquiry is not what GOD may, or
 may not permit; what is consistent, or not
 consistent with his divine wisdom*; but what
 is truth and matter of fact; and how the case,
 with respect to mankind, stands. And in or-
 der to show that the fact is not as the Doctor
 hath represented it, one must disprove all hi-
 story, and flee in the face of universal expe-
 rience itself. But if the facts are as they are
 represented in the foregoing assertions, our au-
 thor's first and fundamental proposition is ut-
 terly false, *p.* 1. “That GOD at all times
 “has given mankind sufficient means of know-
 “ing what he requires of them †.” As is also

* For it is in a very few cases only that we are able to
 determine what GOD may, or may not permit: tho' in the
 general we are sure “That whatever he does, or permits,
 “is wisely done, or permitted.

† i. e. As he himself explains it; All the duties of na-
 tural religion; or, that are founded on the natures of things.

his

his thirteenth proposition, p. 208. " That
 " the bulk of mankind, by their reason, are
 " able to distinguish between religion and su-
 " perstition." And indeed all our author's
 reasonings, to prove these two propositions,
 amount to no more than this; *It seemeth to me*
wise and good that it should be so, therefore it
must be so: and that is a reasoning long ago
 exploded by philosophers in their enquiries
 concerning phænomena, facts, or appearances
 of whatever kind, natural or moral. But not
 to insist upon the arrogance that is in this
 kind of argument, so unbecoming creatures:
 nor to stay to prove the wisdom of the divine
 moral government as it really is, because that
 belongs not to the present question; I shall
 only take notice of the chief things our author
 says against Dr Clarke upon this subject. This,
 says our author, p. 339. (after a short represen-
 tation of Dr Clarke's argument) " is supposing
 " God had left mankind for four thousand
 " years together, and even the greatest part
 " to this day, destitute of sufficient means to
 " do their duty, and to preserve them from
 " sinking into a corrupt and degenerate state,
 " and that it was impossible for them when
 " thus sunk to recover themselves." To this
 I answer, that Dr Clarke's assertion, concern-
 ing the estate of mankind, does not *suppose*,
 but *affirm* this. But then why does the Doctor
 affirm it? Because as he himself tells (of his
Discourse, p. 302.) " In experience and practice
 " it hath appeared to be altogether impossible
 " for philosophy and bare reason to reform
 " mankind effectually, without the assistance
 " of some higher principle; for tho' the bare
 " natural possibility of the thing cannot in-
 " deed

“ deed easily be denied; yet (as Cicero excel-
 “ lently expresses it *) in like manner as in physic
 “ it matters nothing whether a disease be such,
 “ that no man does or no man can recover from
 “ it: so neither does it make any difference whe-
 “ ther by philosophy no man is, or no man can be
 “ made wise and good. So that (continueth the
 “ Doctor) without some greater help and as-
 “ sistance, mankind is plainly left in a very
 “ bad state.”

But according to this supposition says our
 author, p. 340. “ God expects impossibili-
 “ ties from mankind, their duty being the
 “ same after as before the fall, viz. either to
 “ preserve themselves from falling, or if fallen,
 “ to recover themselves.” Now I would glad-
 ly know how this conclusion follows; that be-
 cause mankind actually are in a degenerate state;
 out of which it is morally impossible for them
 to recover themselves, that therefore God ex-
 pects impossibilities. Sure I am Dr Clarke has
 no where said so. And as sure I am the con-
 clusion does not follow. On the contrary it
 is as certain as that there is a God, that God
 cannot require impossibilities; and consequent-
 ly that God cannot require that mankind
 should come to the knowledge of all these
 truths that are necessary to be known by them,
 in order to their effectual recovery out of a
 corrupt and degenerate state; which they can-
 not know without some greater help and as-
 sistance than bare reason. How God will
 judge men at last, belongs not to us to de-
 termine. One thing however we may be sure

* Cicero de Naturâ Deorum, l. iii.

of, that God is merciful and gracious, and will have a due regard, in judging mankind, to the state and circumstances men were placed in by his over-ruling providence: but in reality in this *Enquiry*, which is indeed concerning matter of fact, we are by no means obliged to determine what God may precisely require of men in certain circumstances, or how God will judge men that have been actually placed by his providence in certain circumstances. The question is, What is the *state* of mankind without a *revelation*, and whether *bare philosophy* and *reason* hath ever been able to *teach* mankind even all *moral* duties; and to *enforce* them upon their minds with due efficacy? And to determine this question, and show that there was plainly wanting a divine revelation, to recover mankind out of their universally degenerate estate, into a state suitable to the original excellency of their nature; I appeal, as Dr *Clarke* does, to history and universal experience, which only can determine this question. But surely every unprejudiced reader must needs be surpris'd to hear our author reasoning thus: "That if mankind be
 " in a state of universal degeneracy and corruption, this must then be the state God designed they should be in: and it would seem
 " not only to be in vain, but a crime in them, to endeavour to change that state in which
 " God of his infinite wisdom and goodness thought fit to place them." For the degeneracy and corruption of mankind being indisputable, is not that way of arguing an indirect accusation of an all-wise and infinitely good God, as if he was pleas'd to see his creatures in an abject degenerate state. And
 according

according to this way of reasoning, of our author's (for the fact from which it is inferred is undeniable) it was a crime for *Socrates*, and other brave and wise ancient moralists, to instruct their fellow creatures and endeavour to reform them. And when a nation or people is in a state of ignorance and barbarity, which is the condition of a great part of the world at this very day, it is opposing the design of Heaven; horrid thought! for any one to awaken out of that dismal universal sleep; rouse his natural powers and endeavour to become wiser himself; and still *more criminal* for any one to take pains to make his fellow citizens wiser and better.

As for what follows in the same *p.* 340. one part of it is certainly true: "That GOD will at no time command any thing not fit for him to command; or for man to do." But as for what he says in the beginning of that paragraph: "If men alike at all times owe their existence to GOD, they at all times must be created in a state of innocence, capable of knowing and doing all GOD requires of them." If it proves any thing, it proves (as the schools speak) too much: no more however than is absolutely necessary to the purpose of our author's book; and without which all his reasoning falls to the ground. *That GOD is obliged by his infinite wisdom and goodness, to place all mankind at all times in such circumstances, that they may be all equally wise, equally knowing, equally good, and equally happy; and that any part of mankind's being at any time in a state of corruption and ignorance, is utterly inconsistent with the divine perfections.* And

And if that could be demonstrated; (as indeed it cannot) considering the case of a great part of the world in all ages, and at this very time; there would be no need of disputing about a *divine revelation*.

Our author goes on thus: "The Doctor
 " to shew the fault was not in mankind, but
 " in the guide God gave them; says, &c."
 And here I only desire any candid reader to look to what Dr *Clarke* has said; or cast his eye on what I have quoted from him in his own words; and I will leave it to him to judge of our author's fairness and integrity in his way of treating that worthy justly esteemed author, notwithstanding his pretended zeal for the universal law of righteousness; the very first principle of which is to render justice to every one. The Doctor hath in the plainest strongest terms asserted again and again * "That
 " negligent misunderstanding, and wilful pas-
 " sions or lusts, are the only causes which can
 " make a reasonable creature act contrary to
 " reason. And *that was it not for these inex-*
 " *cusable* corruptions and depravations it is im-
 " possible but the same proportions and fit-
 " nesses of things which have so much weight,
 " and so much excellency in them; that the all-
 " powerful Creator and Governor of the universe
 " thinks it no diminution of his power to make
 " this reason of things the unalterable rule and
 " law of all his own actions in the government
 " of the world; and does nothing by meer
 " will and arbitrariness; it is impossible (saith
 " the Doctor) if it was not for inexcusable

* Dr *Clarke's* Discourse, p. 185.

“ corruption and depravation, but the same
 “ eternal reason of things must much more
 “ have weight enough to determine constant-
 “ ly the wills and actions of all subordinate,
 “ finite, dependent, and accountable Beings.”

And is this then to say that the fault was not in mankind, but in the guide GOD gave them? The Doctor indeed says, that the light of nature and right reason was altogether insufficient to restore true piety; but not that *GOD has any where left himself altogether without a witness*, or that the difference of good and evil is to any rational being undiscernible; but because the greater part of mankind are not only unattentive, and barely ignorant; but commonly they have also, thro' a careless and evil education, taken up early prejudices, and many vain foolish notions which pervert their natural understandings, and hinder them from using their reason in moral matters to any effectual purpose. And because in the generality of men, the appetites and desires of sense are so violent and importunate; the business and the pleasures of the world take up so much of their time; and their passions are so very strong and unreasonable, that of themselves they are very backward and unapt to employ their reason upon moral matters; and still more backward to apply themselves to the practice of them. And that which above all other things, according to the Doctor, most depraves mens natural understandings, and hinders them from discerning and judging rightly of moral truths, is this; That as stupid and careless ignorance leads them into fond and superstitious opinions; and the appetites of sense overcome and tempt them

them into practices contrary to their conscience, and judgments; so on the reverse the multitude of superstitious opinions, vicious habits, and debauched practices; which prevail in all ages, through the greater part of the world, do reciprocally encrease men's gross ignorance, carelessness, and stupidity.

Our author says, p. 340. "And as tho' this was not enough, Dr Clarke adds, that the light of nature no where appeared." Here I beg leave to observe, that Dr Clarke in the place referred to by our author, is quoting Cicero, * and does not make Cicero say, that the *light* of nature no where appears, but that the *true light* of nature no where appears; tho' indeed Cicero himself says, *depravatis sic restinguimus ut nusquam naturæ, lumen appareat*; which is to say, that the light of nature no where appears. 'Tis certainly unfair in disputing with any man not to distinguish when he expresses himself in his own words, and when he chooses to describe a thing in the words of another. But whether Dr Clarke said it, or Cicero said it, the thing is true. † "That nature has given us only some small sparks of right reason, which we so quickly extinguish with corrupt opinions, and evil practices; that the *true light* of nature no where appears. As soon as we are brought into the world, immediately we dwell in the midst of all wickedness, and are surrounded with a number of most perverse and foolish opinions; so that we seem to suck in error even with our nurses milk. Afterwards, when we return to our parents, and are

* Dr Clarke's Discourse, p. 374. † Cic. Tus. Quest. 1. 3.
F 2 " committed

" committed to tutors; then we are further
 " stock'd with such variety of errors, that
 " truth becomes perfectly overwhelmed with
 " falshood, and the most natural sentiment
 " of our minds are entirely stifled with con-
 " firmed follies. But when, after all this, we
 " enter upon business in the world, and make,
 " the multitude conspiring every where in wick-
 " edness, our great guide and example; then
 " our very nature itself is wholly transformed,
 " as it were, into corrupt opinions." A live-
 lier description indeed (as the Doctor says)
 of the present corrupt estate of human nature
 is not easily to be met with. And I have set
 down the passage at large as the Doctor hath
 translated it, because this true account of the
 human nature, in *Cicero's* words, is sufficient
 to prove against our author and all his *Deists*;
 how little bare reason and philosophy is able to
 do; and that revelation is indeed wanting to
 recover mankind out of their corrupt and de-
 generated estate. Let me also recommend to
 their reading the incomparable table of *Cebes*,
 in which the difficulty, if not moral impossi-
 bility, in the present state of mankind, of
 coming even at the true philosophy, is beau-
 tifully and convincingly described.

Our author goes on with his charge against
 the Doctor: " The Doctor, to pursue this
 " point, and to shew that the fault was not
 " in the creatures but the Creator, says, that
 " even those few extraordinary men of the
 " philosophers, who did sincerely endeavour to
 " reform mankind; were themselves intirely
 " ignorant of some doctrines absolutely ne-
 " cessary for bringing about this great end
 " of

“ of the reformation and recovery of mankind:
 “ — their whole attempt to discover the truth
 “ of things, and to instruct others therein, was
 “ like wandering in the wide sea without know-
 “ ing whither to go, or which way to take,
 “ or having any guide to conduct them.”

I need not say, that Dr *Clarke* was incapable of pursuing so *impious a point*; as to *shew* that the fault was not in the creatures, but in the Creator *must be owned* by every sober mind to be. And that the fault is in the Creator and not in the creatures cannot be inferred from any thing that the Doctor hath said, will, I believe, be easily granted; if it is found not to follow from what our author quotes from the Doctor, in order to fix this *monstrous consequence* upon him. For he that was capable of charging him with pursuing so *impious a point*; would certainly have quoted from the Doctor any passage that could most easily be so misrepresented, as to give a palpable handle for inferring such a conclusion from him. What the Doctor asserts concerning the *ignorance* and uncertainty of even those few and extraordinary *philosophers* is fact; and the Doctor proves to be so from history and experience, and the confessions of the best philosophers themselves. But how does it follow from this fact, that the *fault* is in the Creator and not in the *creatures*? Is that to be imputed to God which is manifestly owing to the corruption and degeneracy of men? Or can he be said to *ascribe* the fault to God, who hath clearly and evidently *shewn* that it proceeds from causes by no means imputable to him? What those causes are we have already seen.

But

But as if Dr *Clarke* had wrote his discourse on purpose to impeach GOD; our author goes on with his charge in this manner: “ And
 “ that you might be sure the fault was in the
 “ eternal universal and unchangeable law of
 “ nature, he calls those philosophers who thus
 “ wander in the wide sea, wise, brave, and
 “ good men; who made it their business to study and practice the duties of natural religion
 “ themselves, and to teach and exhort others to
 “ do the like: nay one would imagine he thought
 “ them, notwithstanding their unavoidable ignorance, *inspired*, since he says there never
 “ was a great man but who was inspired (*nemo
 “ unquam magnus vir sine divino afflatu fuit*) and
 “ for this he quotes the authority of *Cicero*,
 “ who, if the Doctor’s reasoning is just, was
 “ certainly inspired.”

Dr *Clarke*, p. 284. shews that some of the antientest writers of the Church have not scrupled to call *Socrates*, and some others of the best of the heathen moralists, by the name of Christians; and to affirm, that as the law was as it were a *school-master* to bring the Jews unto CHRIST; so true moral philosophy was to the Gentiles a *preparative* to receive the Gospel.
 “ And this, saith the Doctor, was perhaps carrying the matter too far. But to be sure
 “ this much we may safely assert, (continueth
 “ he) that whatever any of these men were at
 “ any time enabled to deliver *wisely*, and *profitably*, and *agreeably* to *divine truth*; was, as
 “ a light shining in a dark place, derived to them
 “ by a ray of that infinite overflowing goodness
 “ which does good to all, even both just and
 “ unjust; from GOD the sole author of all
 “ truth

“ *truth and wisdom*: and this for some advantage and benefit to the rest of the world, even in it’s blindest and most corrupt state.” And in this sense these wise, brave, and good men may be said to have been *inspired*; or rather, to use Dr *Clarke*’s words, to have been *raised up* by providence as useful *instruments* to reprove in some measure, and put some kind of check to the extream superstition and wickedness of the nation wherein they lived. But I would have it observed, that where Dr *Clarke* quotes the authority of *Cicero*, p. 303, it is to prove, that the best and wisest philosophers ever confessed that human nature was so strangely corrupted and degenerated; that to remedy all those disorders, and conquer all these corruptions; there was plainly wanting some extraordinary and supernatural *assistance*, which was above the reach of *bare reason* and and *philosophy* to procure; and yet without which the philosophers themselves were sensible there could never *truly* be any great men. But how does it follow, that the fault was in the Creator and not in the creatures; or that the fault was in the eternal and unchangeable law of nature; because the best and wisest philosophers were, as they themselves own, in ignorance and blindness, and much in the dark, not only as to the *profounder things of wisdom*, but as to such things also which seemed very capable of being in great part discovered*? nay even those things which in themselves were of all others the most manifest, (that is, which whenever *made known* would appear most obvious and evident) their natural understanding

* Dr *Clarke*’s Discourse, p. 289.

was of itself as unqualified to find out and apprehend, as the eyes of bats to behold the light of the sun? Is there not a manifest distinction between saying that the eternal differences of things upon which the law of nature is founded are clearly discernible; and would necessarily force our assent; if we would but attend to them with due attention, and without prejudices: And saying, on the other hand, that in the present degenerate state of mankind, without a greater guide than bare reason; without a higher assistance than philosophy alone can afford; few, very few, are able to arrive at any tolerable degree of moral knowledge; much less at any tolerable degree of moral perfection in their practice: And that the generality of mankind must remain unavoidably in a blind ignorant state; and shew the effects of their blindness in the wickedness and depravity of their lives.

Both are true in fact; nor is there, or can there be, any inconsistency; unless truth can clash with truth; or one matter of fact be inconsistent with another. Nothing more is necessary to *vindicate* the eternal and unchangeable law of nature, or it's author; than to *shew*, as Dr *Clarke* has clearly done, that the law of nature is in itself clear and manifest; and that the negligent misunderstanding, and wilful passions or lusts are the only causes which can hinder a reasonable creature from perceiving it's obligation; or make him act contrary to it: And that it is owing to the corruption and degeneracy of mankind, whencesoever that originally proceeds, that the law of nature hath not that weight to determine the wills and actions
of

of all rational Beings, which it naturally and necessarily must have when duly apprehended or attended to.

“ Our author says, that the Doctor’s scheme outdoes that of the most rigid predestinarians; for that at all times saves the *elect*, but there are no *elect*: but all for many ages are inextricably involv’d in a most depraved, corrupted, and impious state.”

I find Dr *Clarke*, as hath been often said, giving a true account of the state and condition of men in all ages: but I do not find Dr *Clarke* pronouncing a sentence of damnation against any part of mankind: nor does it appear to me to follow from his scheme, that God will damn any part of mankind, for faults out of which they could not possibly extricate themselves. Nor indeed, according to the true scheme by which alone we can know any thing about damnation or salvation with any certainty; the scheme of the Gospel; the wrath of GOD revealed from Heaven, except against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; who hold the truth in unrighteousness, because that which can be known of GOD is manifest in them, for GOD hath shewed it unto them: So that they are without excuse: because that when they knew GOD, they glorified him not as GOD; neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened, professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the incorruptible GOD, into an image made like unto corruptible man. — Who changed the truth of GOD into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the

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Creator,

Creator, who is blessed for ever. ——— And even as they did not like to retain GOD in their knowledge; GOD gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient. ——— Who, knowing the judgment of GOD, (that they which commit such things are worthy of death) not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them *. This is the judgment of GOD; and this judgment (as the same Apostle saith in the following chapter) is according to truth.

Our author goes on thus, p. 342. “ Tho’
 “ I pay a due deference to the Doctor’s deep
 “ penetration in matters of religion, I dare not
 “ say there is the least difference between the
 “ law of nature and the gospel, for that would
 “ suppose some defect in one of them, and re-
 “ flect on the author of both; who certainly
 “ was equally good, equally wise, when he
 “ gave the one as when he gave the other (if
 “ it may be called another) law. Nor dare I
 “ be so rash as to charge the light of nature
 “ with *undeniable defects*, as the Doctor pre-
 “ sumes to do; since if that light was suffi-
 “ cient to answer the end designed by GOD,
 “ which was to be a competent guide to
 “ men in relation to their present and future
 “ happiness there could be no deficiency:
 “ if not, then there must be an undeni-
 “ able default in the giver of it; in appoint-
 “ ing means not sufficient to answer their de-
 “ signed ends, tho’ both means and ends
 “ were entirely in his power.”

* Rom. i.

This is not only the modeſteſt paſſage in our author's book, but muſt be owned to be ſomething like reaſoning to prove that, according to Dr *Clarke's* Scheme, the fault muſt be in the guide which God hath given to man. But in answer to it; let us obſerve firſt, that there is a manifeſt difference between the *Law of Nature* and the *Gospel*; which does not ſuppoſe any defect in one of them; nor reflect on the author of both. The *Gospel* ſets before us certain truths which are powerful motives to moral obedience; that the *Law*, or *Light of Nature*, cannot diſcover: Not that there is any defect in the *Law of Nature*, but becauſe theſe truths, in the nature of things, cannot be known by the *Light of Nature*; but can only be made known by divine teſtimony. And ſurely the *Light* or *Law of Nature* cannot be ſaid to be imperfect; becauſe it cannot diſcover that, which, according to the nature of things, is not diſcoverable by the *Light of Nature*. Far leſs does it reflect upon the author of the *Law of Nature*, that he hath revealed and made known to mankind by *JESUS CHRIST*, theſe motives, helps, and aſſiſtances to moral obedience, which the *Light of Nature* or un-aſſiſted *Reason* could not poſſibly make known

Secondly, I would have it obſerved, that, according to Dr *Clarke's* Scheme, in the degenerate corrupt ſtate of mankind, the *Light of Nature* is not ſufficient to recover mankind out of that eſtate, into a ſtate ſuitable to the original excellency of their nature; but that there was plainly wanting a divine revelation to answer that end. And hence it plainly follows, that the *Light of Nature* was not deſigned by God

to answer that end; but that on the contrary, both the necessities of men and their natural notions of God, ever gave reasonable ground to expect and hope for a divine revelation, as the only sufficient and competent remedy to recover mankind. Our author's argument plainly depends upon this supposition; that God designed the light of nature to be a competent guide to men, in relation to their present and future happiness. But to this I answer, in Dr *Clarke's* words, p. 303. " That indeed in the
 " original uncorrupted state of human nature,
 " before the mind of man was depraved with
 " prejudicate opinions, corrupt affections, and
 " vicious inclinations, customs, and habits;
 " right reason may justly be supposed to have
 " been a sufficient guide; and a principle
 " powerful enough to preserve men in the
 " constant practice of duty. But in the present
 " circumstances and conditions of mankind,
 " the wisest and most sensible of the Philosophers
 " themselves, have not been backward
 " to complain, that they found the understandings
 " of men so dark and cloudy, their wills
 " so biassed and inclined to evil, their passions
 " so outrageous and rebellious against reason;
 " that they looked upon the rules and
 " laws of right reason as very hardly practicable,
 " and which they had very little hopes
 " of ever being able to persuade the world
 " to submit to. In a word, they confessed
 " that human nature was strangely corrupted;
 " and they acknowledged this corruption to
 " be a disease of which they knew not the
 " true cause, and could not find out a sufficient
 " remedy. So that the great duties
 " of religion were laid down by them, as mat-
 " ters

“ ters of speculation and dispute rather than
 “ as the rules of action; and not so much
 “ urged upon the hearts and lives of men, as
 “ proposed to the admiration of those who
 “ thought them hardly possible to be practised
 “ by the generality of men. And therefore that
 “ to remedy all these disorders, and conquer
 “ all these impediments, there was plainly
 “ wanting some extraordinary, and superna-
 “ tural assistance; which was above the reach
 “ of bare reason and philosophy to procure.”

Indeed what God designs as absolutely sufficient to answer an end, must be absolutely sufficient to answer that end. But the very thing Dr *Clarke* proves from history and experience, as a fact must be proved, is, that in the present corrupted circumstances of mankind, a divine revelation is necessary to recover men out of that degenerate estate; and was not only *designed* by God, but actually *given* by him, to answer that end.

Our author goes on: “ Nor dare I say,
 “ there are several necessary truths not possible to be discovered with any certainty by
 “ the light of nature; because God’s means
 “ of information, will and must always bear
 “ an exact proportion to the necessity of our
 “ knowing what we are obliged to know, especially touching the nature and attributes
 “ of God.”

And here I will shew, with Dr *Clarke*, that there are *necessary truths*; not possible to be discovered, with any certainty, by the light of nature: that is, truths necessary to the great end of recovering mankind out

out of their universal degenerate estate, into a state suitable to the original excellency of their nature. Only let it be first observed, that all the means of information and knowledge given by GOD to mankind, whether by revelation, or by the light of nature, cannot be of any use to men, if men will not make due use of them; and consequently, that even these attributes of GOD, which are clearly manifested in us, and may be clearly understood by the things that are made; his eternal power and Godhead cannot be seen or understood, if men will shut their eyes against the light which shines clearly around them; and in spite of all they know, will not glorify GOD as they know he ought to be glorified. And that as wilful ignorance and blindness must produce superstition and wickedness: so superstition and wickedness must reciprocally encrease blindness and ignorance.

And passing all the idle cavils he hath gathered together against the scripture account of the original state of human nature, which have been so often refuted; I shall confine myself to the objections he makes against what the Doctor says concerning the impossibility of knowing, by the light of nature, with any certainty, what, as the Doctor saith of all other things, was of the greatest importance for sinful men to know, viz. *The method by which such as have erred from the right way, and have offended GOD, may yet again restore themselves to the favour of GOD, and to the hopes of happiness.*

Our author's first argument against the Doctor amounts to this: " That Mr Nye and Mr
" *Locke*

“ *Locke* say ; The *one*, that if *God* be a mer-
 “ ciful and benign Being, he will accept the
 “ payment we are able to make, and not in-
 “ sist upon impossible demands with his frail
 “ bankrupt creatures. The *other*, that the
 “ same spark of divine nature and knowledge
 “ which, making him a man, shewed him the
 “ law he was under, as a man ; shewed him
 “ also the way of atoneing the merciful, kind,
 “ compassionate author and father of him and
 “ his being, when he had transgressed that
 “ law.”

To which I answer, that it is very easy to
 prove from Mr *Nye* and Mr *Locke*, that up-
 on the whole, they have said no more upon
 this head than what Dr *Clarke* hath also said.
 “ That from the consideration of the good-
 “ ness and mercifulness of *God*, the philoso-
 “ phers did indeed very reasonably hope, that
 “ *God* would shew himself placable to sinners ;
 “ and might be some way reconciled.” But
 whoever asserts, that *God* must receive return-
 ing sinners ; and accept of repentance instead
 of perfect obedience ; or that *God* is abso-
 lutely *obliged* to pardon all creatures all their
 sins at all times, barely and immediately upon
 their repenting ; ought to prove it ; and he who
 attempts to do it, will soon find it impossible.
 “ For, as Dr *Clarke* saith, it cannot be posi-
 “ tively proved from any of *God*’s attributes :
 “ And yet while that remains uncertain there
 “ is no sufficient comfort to sinners ; but anxi-
 “ ous and endless solicitude about the means of
 “ appeasing the Deity.” And all our author

Dr *Clarke*’s Discourse, p. 293.

himself

himself says to prove that repentance must be sufficient to procure pardon, amounts to this:
 " That the supposing God had left all mankind
 " for so many ages in a most miserable state
 " of doubt and uncertainty about the pardon
 " of sin, is inconsistent with the divine good-
 " ness, or he is at a loss to know what is so."
 Is then every thing inconsistent with the di-
 vine goodness, which we cannot know how it
 is consistent with the divine goodness? From
 what we know of God and his perfections,
 we have good reason to conclude, that every
 thing that God does in the government of the
 world, is perfectly consistent with his goodness,
 and with the *great end* of his government, which
 can be nothing else but the *good of the whole*.
 And it is no wonder, that several facts and
 events appear to us, in our partial, narrow
 view of things very unaccountable, or rather
 inexplicable. We ought never therefore to
 reason thus; *Such a thing cannot be, because we*
cannot see how it is consistent with the divine good-
ness that it should be: But ought with regard
 to the divine government to content ourselves
 to know what is matter of fact; and ought
 ever to conclude, as we have abundant rea-
 son to do, that *whatever GOD does, is wisely*
done, tho' in innumerable instances we are not
 able to find out the wise reason for which it
 is done. Thus are we, particularly in this case,
 to reason, that God's having left the greater
 part of mankind, in a most miserable state of
 doubt about the pardon of sin, is not incoh-
 sistent with the great ends of the divine go-
 vernment; because the fact is certain. For tho'
 it should be granted possible for reason to
 prove, that God will forgive upon repentance;
 yet

yet it is indisputable, that even the *best* and *wisest* of mankind have always been in the greatest uncertainty about that point, as they themselves have owned. And here we may again apply what *Cicero* says of philosophy, in another respect, it being equally applicable in this: "In like manner as in physic, it matters nothing whether a disease be such, that no man does, or no man can, recover from it; so neither does it make any difference whether, by philosophy, no man is, or no man can, be made sure of the method, by which such as have offended God may again restore themselves to his favour." We know indeed, that as God cannot command tyrannically; or without a reason worthy of himself and his administration; so neither can God punish in this world, or the world to come, but in a way suitable to the great end of his government; the general good of the whole. But can we, by the light of nature, fully ascertain the duration and proportions of punishments and rewards in a future life, which this end precisely makes necessary, or fit? Can we indeed find out, by reason alone, what must be the methods of divine providence in the other world? Or how the general good and happiness of the whole system of rational Beings positively requires, that the various classes and sorts even of repenting sinners should be disposed of? Is any thing more certain, than that the virtue of the best in this world is but very weak and inconstant; that reformation is often very late, and never perfect? And is it demonstrable by reason, that God will immediately after death make every sincere penitent eternally happy in the enjoyment of himself;

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and

and that there is no degree of suffering or punishment in the other world, but for those who have lived and died in an obstinate hardened course of sin? He who saith there is no need of revelation must however shew, that reason alone is sufficient to answer every important question concerning a future state; and to set all in a clear and satisfying light that is necessary to the satisfaction of a thinking honest man. In a word, it is certain, that when we have offended, the best part we can act, is to repent: and we have reason to hope, that, if our repentance is sincere, and produces, in our after conduct, an humble strict, and lasting watchfulness, GOD of his infinite goodness will at last forgive us. But in order to prove that GOD is obliged to forgive us immediately, we must be able to point out the reason that obliges him. That his goodness obliges him to accept of the repentance of all sinners, at all times, for all sins, and to make the reformed sinner eternally happy; can never with any colour of reason be asserted; unless we can prove, *that the good of the whole* obliges him to it. For the good of the whole, is the end that infinite goodness obliges GOD to pursue; if his infinite goodness can properly be said to oblige him to any thing. And who does not see that in order to point out with any certainty what the good of the whole requires; as to that point, we must know more than creatures can possibly know, without divine instruction, or a divine revelation.

I will now sum up all that hath been already said; or that it is indeed necessary to say, in order to vindicate Dr *Clarke* from the inconsistencies

sufficiencies with which he is charged by the author of *Christianity as old as the Creation*: or to prove, that *Christianity is neither false nor useless, tho' not as old as the Creation*, in the few following observations; all of which Dr Clarke has sufficiently proved.

First, That the saying the law of nature is not sufficient to recover man out of their universally degenerate estate, into a state suitable to the original excellency of their nature; is not saying, that in the original uncorrupted state of human nature right reason was not a sufficient guide; and a principle powerful enough to preserve men in the constant practice of their duty. And that it is not accusing the law of nature of any defect to say, that in the present circumstances and condition of mankind, it is not a sufficient guide; because it's insufficiency to be a guide in these circumstances, proceeds from mankind's actually being in these circumstances. And mankind's being in these circumstances does not reflect upon the author of our nature, unless it is contrary to divine wisdom and goodness to have created us moral free agents.

Secondly, * That in christian countries, at least where Christianity is professed in any tolerable degree of purity, the generality, even of the meaner and most vulgar and ignorant people have truer and worthier notions of God, more just and right apprehensions concerning his attributes and perfections, a deeper sense of the difference of good and evil, a

* Dr Clarke's Discourse, p. 311.

greater regard to moral obligations, and to the plain and most necessary duties of life, and a more firm and universal expectation of rewards and punishments, than in any heathen country any considerable number of men were ever found to have had. This is true in fact; and therefore Christianity is not useless.

Thirdly, That Christianity, or the Gospel of CHRIST, makes known, or reveals, several truths not discoverable by the light of nature, the knowledge of which is absolutely necessary to recover mankind out of their degenerate depraved estate; and which have the most powerful and effectual influence, when known, to promote the honour of GOD, and the practice of universal righteousness among mankind. And that CHRIST hath confirmed by miracles his divine commission to teach these truths; given sufficient evidence of his being sent of GOD to reform mankind effectually, to restore them to the favour of GOD; instruct them in all their duties; and give them all the motives, helps, and assistances, that are necessary to enable mankind in their corrupted degenerate state, to perform all the duties which the eternal law of reason shews to be obligatory or binding upon all rational creatures. And therefore that Christianity is neither false nor useless, and yet no older than the teaching of CHRIST.

Fourthly, That in order to prove, that a divine revelation is needless, or not wanting; one must not only prove, that the light of nature is able of itself to discover to a corrupt and sinful world, all that is necessary to their effectual

ctual reformation; But that the law of nature was ever perfectly well understood; and ever had due weight and influence †. For if the contrary is true, as it certainly is, it follows evidently, that *revelation is wanting, nay necessary*. It is in vain to talk of a light that never enlightned; of a law that was scarcely known, and had but little influence even upon those who owned it's obligation; of a remedy that never wrought a cure. Supposing it to be true, that all the obligations and motives of morality, could be discovered and explained clearly by the meer *light of nature alone*; this would not at all prove, that there is no need of revelation: while it is certain in fact, that the wisest philosophers of old were never able to do so to any effectual purpose, but always wanted some higher assistance. But on the contrary it must follow, from that matter of fact, that the Christian Revelation is so far from being *useless*, that it is absolutely necessary.

Fifthly, From these considerations plainly follows, the exceeding great use * and necessity there is of establishing an order or succession of men, as is by CHRIST appointed, whose peculiar office or continual employment it may be, to teach and instruct the people in their duty, to press and exhort them perpetually to the practice of it, and to be instruments of conveying extraordinary assistances to them for

† All that our author says about the sufficiency of the light of nature, supposes, that there is no difference between being knowable, and being actually known.

* Dr Clarke's Discourse, p. 281,

that

that purpose. To this excellent institution it is, that the right and worthy notion of God and his divine perfections, the just sense and understanding of the great duties of religion, and the universal belief and due apprehension of a future state of rewards and punishments, which the generality even of the meaner, and more ignorant sort of people among us are now possess'd of; are manifestly and undeniably almost wholly owing. Hence it follows, that such an institution is of the greatest use in society: And that friends to society and useful knowledge must be friends to such an institution.

Sixtly, That the small influence Christianity has to reform men, in proportion to what it must be owned to be naturally fitted to have; or the mischievous purposes to which it hath been misapplied; can only prove, that when all is done by providence to instruct, reclaim, or reform mankind, that could be done consistently with our natures as moral and free agents, mankind are hardly to be reformed. And to ask why Christianity was not sooner revealed, and made known, seeing it is so necessary? is really asking how comes it about, that the infinite wise ends of God's government did not allow that CHRIST should appear sooner in the world than he did? a question to which we need not be ashamed to own, that we can give no answer: but that so it seemed good to him who cannot err.

Sevently, That if one, who really loves mankind, and wishes well to human society, is not seriously convinced in his own mind, not only

only that the christian religion is false and useless, but that it is pernicious, and tends to the hurt and ruin of mankind; *seeing there must be a public religion*; he cannot possibly answer to his own conscience for endeavouring to destroy or diminish it's authority and influence: Far less can he answer to his own conscience, or his natural sense of right and wrong, for his taking pains to subvert the belief of the most powerful motives and persuasives to virtue and goodness; to the love of God and of mankind; and to weaken the credit of institutions which evidently tend to promote these ends. And yet of these two it is that Christianity is made up.

Eighthly, That tho' evil spirits can do miracles, it is manifestly absurd to suppose, that they would employ their powers, or work miracles to instruct men in their duty to God, and to enforce upon them the practice of every moral virtue; and to assure them of assistance and success in their earnest aims and endeavours to advance and improve in piety and virtue. And therefore JESUS CHRIST, by the miracles he worked, gave a full and compleat proof of his really being invested with the divine power and authority to which he pretended; that he was indeed sent of God, not only to republish the law of nature, the law of moral duties, which tho' deducible from the nature and reason of things, thro' the degeneracy and corruption of mankind was become of no effect; but likewise *to make known the Gospel of peace, the doctrine of grace and eternal consolation*; to teach the forgiveness of sins; and to call all men to repent, that they might find favour
with

with God, and obtain eternal life; to bring life and immortality to light; and to assure men, that if they are not wanting to themselves, but in good earnest to become virtuous; and seriously implore *wisdom* and *assistance* from God in his name, God will not upbraid them, but give, unto them that ask, *liberally*; and reward their pious and virtuous labours here with immortal glory and happiness hereafter. His miracles were not only an undeniable proof of his mission from Heaven, but, in the nature of things, compleat and adequate *specimens* or *samples* of all these doctrines, of all that he taught as our divine Instructor, and ever blessed SAVIOUR. And therefore Christianity is not only useful, divinely useful, but infallibly true; tho', in the nature of things, it cannot possibly be more antient than the *appearance* of it's *Divine Author* in the world. And, upon the whole then, I may justly conclude, that he who loveth God and mankind, society and virtue, must like Christianity; or must have a very false or wrong notion of it. A mistake from which any one must soon be delivered, who will do common justice to Christianity; and seek for it in the discourses of our SAVIOUR and his Apostles.



F I N I S